REVIEW AND APPROVALS

MORRIS WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Morris, Minnesota

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT
Fiscal Year 2001

_____	_____	_____	_____
Wetland Manager	Date	Refuge Supervisor 3	Date

_____	_____
Regional Chief, NWRS	Date

INTRODUCTION

The Morris Wetland Management District (WMD), originally established in 1964 as the Benson WMD, includes 244 Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) totaling 50,614.92 acres in fee title ownership. In addition, the Morris office administers approximately 20,606 wetland acres of Waterfowl Management Easement lands, 1,237 acres of FmHA Easements and 3,106 acres of Wildlife Habitat Protection Easements. The Morris WMD also administers fee and easement units of the newly created Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. In 2001, we acquired our first three prairie easement tracts totaling 215.86 acres. All fee and easement areas are scattered throughout Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Pope, Stevens, Swift, Traverse and Yellow Medicine Counties. The headquarters is located four miles east of Morris, Minnesota on the 861 acre Long Lake-Edwards WPA.

The topography of west-central Minnesota is diverse, ranging from the granite outcrops of the Minnesota River bottoms to the rolling hills of Pope County. The flat agricultural land of the Red River Valley of the north blends into the transition zone between the tallgrass prairie and the eastern deciduous forest. Soils of the region are generally productive which contributed to the historically high concentrations of breeding waterfowl. With the advent of modern agriculture, over 85 percent of the original wetlands were drained and nearly 100 percent of the native grasslands were converted to cropland.

The primary objectives of this District are to acquire, develop, and manage habitat for waterfowl production. Waterfowl species that commonly breed in this area include blue-winged teal, mallard, pintail, wood duck, redhead, canvasback, and Canada goose. The District also contains good populations of ring-necked pheasant, gray partridge and white-tailed deer. Another high priority objective is to provide habitat for native plants and animals. Private land habitat improvement for waterfowl and other wildlife is an important habitat restoration tool. Waterfowl production areas are open to public hunting and a variety of other wildlife oriented uses. The WPAs receive their highest public use on opening days of waterfowl, pheasant, and deer hunting seasons.

The 50,615 acres of fee-title WPAs that we manage includes 17,530 acres of wetland, 7,038 acres of native prairie, 8,971 acres of re-seeded natives, 13,068 acres of other grasslands, 2,271 acres of woody cover, 1,045 acres of cropland, and 692 acres of other habitat (roads, rivers, and other miscellaneous habitat types).

INTRODUCTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESOURCE PROTECTION Page

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

HIGHLIGHTS

1. The District produced an estimated 49,400 duck recruits with a recruitment rate of 0.65. This production estimate is down by almost 60 percent from last year's estimated production of 118,100. (section 1a)

2. We restored 38 wetlands covering 116 acres. (section 2a)

3. We planted native vegetation on over 400 acres of former crop land. (section 2b)

4. We performed 28 prescribed burns encompassing 2,575 acres. (section 3f)

5. Prairie chickens were re-introduced into Traverse County. (section 4c)

6. Friends of the Morris Wetland Management District formed. (section 8b)

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Morris, Minnesota

October 2000: Warm, Sunny Days

Mean temperature was 49.3° compared to the average which is 47.2°. Total precipitation was 1.53 inches. Foggy conditions occurred on the 16th and 17th. On October 19th an unofficial reading of 90° was seen in the area.

November 2000: Wet

Mean temperature was 27.0° compared with the normal 29.7°. November 1 was a nice warm day, then on the 2nd wet rain. Total precipitation was 3.41 inches for the month. Snowfall was 7.8 inches; average is 4.7 inches. November 8-11 saw heavy, wet snow of 6 inches or more in the area.

December 2000: Cold With Negative Temperatures

Mean temperature of 3.0° compared to normal 15.2°. Total precipitation was 0.87 inches and 12.6 inches of snow. The first blizzard of the winter occurred on December 16th with high winds (40 mph), causing white-out conditions and poor visibility topped with bitterly cold mercury readings and drifting snow.

2001-The area struggled with Mother Nature. A combination of melting snow and heavy rains resulted in a second 100 year flood for the area in as little as four years. Too much rain, too little sun and heat delayed the area's planting of crops. To make matters worse, tornadoes hit the Benson-DeGraff area. Above normal precipitation occurred in all months except March and August.

January 2001: Thaw

The first day continued with December's cold weather pattern then on the second day of the new year a complete turn around with a 50 degree jump in temperature. Mean temperature was 14.7°, 6.7° above normal. Highest reading was 42° on the 5th and the low was -19° on the 2nd. Precipitation totaled 1.17 inches, 0.49 inches above normal. Precipitation on the 30th totaled 0.86 inches, which came as a mixture of rain, freezing rain, and snow, as well as an Arctic chill which set the lowest reading of the new year. Snowfall was 7.3 inches. This winter (October-December) 27.7 inches of snow fell, about 8 inches above normal. Hoar frost blanketed the area for several days in mid-January.

February 2001: Snow

Mother Nature dumped more of that white stuff. The weather roller coaster became stuck at the bottom as temperature readings below freezing were common, then, when the temperature rose, the snow fell. Over 50 inches had accumulated since November. Minnesotans know this is just a normal winter-cold, wind, an average of 50-60 inches of snow cover and plenty of complaining about the weather. Mean temperature was 7.0°, 5.8° below normal. High temperature was 30° on the 4th and the low was -31° on the 2nd. Precipitation totaled 1.47 inches. Snowfall for the month was 20.0 inches, about 13 inches above normal.

March 2001: More Snow

Some sunny days started the snow melting but in the final week a cold spell set in once again. Mean temperature was 19.5°, 7.2° below normal. High temperature was 42° on the 15th and the lowest was -8° on the 12th. Precipitation totaled 0.66 inches. Total snowfall was 7.0 inches, about one inch below normal. Total snowfall for the winter (November-March) was 54.7 inches.

April 2001: Wind and Rain

Mean temperature 42.9°. Highest temperature of 82° occurred on the 29th and 30th, with the lowest temperature of 16° on the 21st. Precipitation was 5.53 inches, 3.27 inches above normal. April was the 6th wettest on record. Major events occurred on the 7th with 2.49 inches of precipitation, on the 12th with 1.12 inches, and the 23rd with 1.77 inches (new daily precipitation record). Total snowfall for the winter was 54.7 inches, 15.3 inches above the 111 year mean of 39.4 inches.

On April 17th heavy rains and strong winds (50 mph), combined with the snow melt, caused threats of flash flooding on the swollen Pomme de Terre River. Winds pushing the ice off Marsh Lake Dam located southwest of Appleton, Minnesota, eroded parts of the dam causing a local scare. Waves and sharp blocks of ice battered the dam, however, the expected flooding failed to materialize.

According to climatologists this year's flooding took root in the heavy rains last November, then came plenty of heavy wet snow, followed by unusually cold weather in March which delayed thawing. Finally, inundated by heavy rain in April (3-6 inches), flooding arrived not long there-after. Heavy rains and heavy flows of water plus water released from a big ditch surrounding the Chokio area were added into the swollen Pomme de Terre River. The river did not rise to expected levels and slowly fell 10 to 12 inches, however, further south along the Minnesota River repeated the flooding of 1997. Montevideo and Granite Falls once again were inundated by the flooding water.

May 2001: Cool-Wet

May was wet the first part of the month, hot and dry mid month, and wet towards the end. The mean temperature was 59.0°, 2.9° above normal. High was 95° on the 15th and the lowest was 37° on the 23rd. Total precipitation for May was 3.26 inches, 0.29 inches above normal.

June 2001:

The mean temperature was 67.2º, 1.4º above normal. High for the month was 98º which occurred on the 26th and the low was 48º on the 3rd and 19th. There were 4 days with 90º or above temperatures, the 25th, 26th, 28th, and 29th. Precipitation totaled 5.63 inches, 1.67 inches above normal. Precipitation on June 10th was 1.46 inches which set a new daily record. A narrow band of intense rain and hail occurred over the noon hour on the north side of Morris on the 27th. Local weather instruments there indicated 2.8 inches, however, the official measurements only recorded 0.37 inches. The east side of Benson was hit by tornadoes on June 11th. Two members of the Morris WMD staff lost their places of business as a result of the storm.

July 2001: Warmer and Wetter Than Normal

Mean temperature was 72.1º, 1.2º above normal. Highest temperature was 90º on the 19th and the low was 49º on the 1st. Precipitation totaled 4.18 inches which is 0.67 inches above normal.

August 2001:

Mean temperature for August was 71.1º, 2.4º above normal. The high temperature was 93º on the 1st, 6th and 8th. Low temperature was 49º on the 10th and 31st. Total precipitation was 2.14 inches, 0.87 inches above normal.

September 2001:

September's mean temperature was 59.3º, 0.3º above normal. High temperature was 89º on the 6th and low was a 34º on the 24th. Precipitation totaled 4.38 inches in September, 2.1 inches above normal. The first frost occurred the nights of the 24th and 25th. A record rainfall on the 7th of 1.33 inches was recorded.

Table 1 - Comparative Weather Data
October 1999 Through September 2001
Morris, Minnesota

	Mean Temperature (°F)				Total Precipitation (Inches)				Snowfall (Inches)			
	2001	**2000**	**1999**	**Aver**	**2001**	**2000**	**1999**	**Aver**	**2001**	**2000**	**1999**	**Aver**
Oct.		49.3	45.3	47.2		1.53	0.31	1.74		0.0	0.0	0.7
Nov.		27.0	39.15	29.7		3.41	0.07	0.97		7.8	0.0	4.7
Dec.		3.0	23.1	15.2		0.87	0.32	0.68		12.6	3.7	6.6
Jan.	14.7	10.8		8.0	0.77	1.17		0.68	7.3	11.3		7.8
Feb.	7.0	21.7		12.8	1.47	1.36		0.67	20.0	9.6		6.9
Mar.	19.5	38.3		26.7	0.66	1.10		1.13	7.0	0.3		8.0
Apr.	42.9	43.6		43.6	5.53	1.45		2.26	0.0	3.8		3.4
May	59.0	59.7		56.1	3.26	3.37		2.97	0.0	0.0		0.2
June	67.2	61.9		65.8	5.63	3.97		3.96	0.0	0.0		0.0
July	72.1	69.8		70.9	4.18	4.41		3.51	0.0	0.0		0.0
Aug.	71.1	70.0		68.7	2.14	1.63		3.01	0.0	0.0		0.0
Sept.	59.3	57.4		59.0	4.38	1.79		2.20	0.0	0.0		0.1

Table 2 - Selected Weather Variables
Morris, Minnesota

Weather	2001	2000	Normal
Growing season precipitation	20.74"	14.83"	15.71"
Maximum temperature	98°	97°	
Minimum temperature	-31°	-35°	
Days with temp. >90° F	14	7	13
Days with temp. <0° F	40	46	48
Last spring frost	April 23	April 21	May 11

First fall frost	Sept. 24	Sept. 22	Oct. 4
Corn growing degree days	2,448	2,320	2,300

MONITORING AND STUDIES

1a. Surveys and Censuses

Christmas Bird Count

An area group of bird watchers completed the 8th annual Morris Christmas Bird Count on December 27, 2000. The group observed 26 bird species. Some highlights were a pied-billed grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) and a red-phase eastern screech owl (*Otus asio*).

Woodcock Survey

Morris staff again participated in the annual singing-ground survey, used to assess the population status of the American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*). Two survey routes were run this year, one in Pope County and one in Stevens County. Routes are 3.6 miles long, with 10 listening stations where observers record the number of woodcock heard peenting. The route in Pope County is run annually. This year it was done on May 16, with seven birds observed. The Stevens County route is run every five years unless birds are observed, in which case it would be run annually. This year it was run on May 10, with no woodcock observed. There were fewer woodcock observed this year (7) as compared to 2000 (9), which is consistent with trends for the central woodcock population (a 12.9 percent decline from 2000-2001).

Pheasant Crowing Counts

Staff members assisted the local DNR office with two ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) crowing counts in May. Results of this survey are not yet available.

Four Square Mile Waterfowl Pair Count

The number and condition of ponds in the Prairie Pothole Region of Minnesota and Iowa was similar to 2000. Waterfowl pair and production estimates in the region were down from 2000 (43 percent and 40 percent, respectively). Breeding population and production estimates for the Morris WMD were provided by the Region 3 Habitat and Population Evaluation Team, using results of our Four Square Mile Survey (Table 3). For the Morris District, all 2001 estimates of population and production were below the long-term average. Changes from 2000 were a little more drastic for the District as compared to the region as a whole (e.g., pairs declined 57

percent, recruits declined 58 percent). However, the estimated recruitment rate increased 3 percent from 2000.

Table 3) Four Square Mile Survey Breeding Population and Production Estimates

	Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos)*	Blue-Winged Teal (*Anas discors*)	Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)	All Species
Breeding Pairs	24,000	11,100	3,000	46,100
Pairs/Sq. Mile	5.1	2.4	0.6	9.8
Pairs/Pond	0.9	0.4	0.1	1.6
Total Recruits	25,500	19,400		49,400
Recruits/Sq. Mile	5.4	4.1		10.5
Recruitment Rate*	0.53			0.65

* Recruitment rate is the number of female ducklings produced per hen. For mallards, a recruitment rate of 0.49 is required for a stable population.

Rail and Bittern Survey

The rails and bitterns are included in a suite of marshbirds that are secretive in nature and so are commonly overlooked in point counts and other survey techniques that rely on visual observation. This was the second year that Morris staff surveyed for these marshbirds. Staff used a call-response technique where a recording of target species is played and any response heard is recorded. The survey was done this year at Edwards and Fitzgerald WPAs (both in Stevens County) on June 8. Although planned, unfavorable weather precluded surveying other WPAs. Four species were observed during the survey (see Table 4).

Table 4 – Birds Observed During Rail and Bittern Survey

WPA	Common Name	Scientific Name	Number Observed
Edwards	Pied-billed grebe	*Podilymbus podiceps*	2
	American coot	*Fulica americana*	1
Fitzgerald	Pied-billed grebe	*Podilymbus podiceps*	1
	Virginia rail	*Rallus limicola*	1
	Sora	*Porzana carolina*	1

Predator/Furbearer Scent Station Survey

This was the 26th year of the Minnesota scent station survey, which is an interagency cooperative effort involving state, federal, and tribal agencies, schools, and other organizations. The survey data are used to create population indices for fur-bearers, dogs, and cats in the state. The survey generally takes place during a three week interval in the fall (late August through early October). Each route has 10 scent stations spaced 0.43 km apart. Scent stations are baited with a biodegradable plaster-of-paris fatty acid scent (Fas) disc and left overnight. All tracks at the scent stations are identified and documented the following morning.

Table 5 – Scent Station Visits in the Morris Wetland Management District 1995 - 2001

Common Name	Scientific Name	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Coyote	*Canis latrans*	1	1	0	1	3	3	4
Red fox	*Vulpes vulpes*	20	11	12	15	9	14	9
Striped skunk	*Mephitis mephitis*	14	11	11	26	23	18	14
Raccoon	*Procyon lotor*	25	30	33	13	22	5	23
Dog	*Canis familaris*	12	13	8	3	3	8	16
Cat	*Felis catus*	10	18	16	21	14	15	14
Opossum	*Didelphis virginiana*	0	0	1	6	0	1	1
Mink	*Mustela vison*	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

The Morris WMD operated 15 scent station routes in four counties. The routes were run between September 5 and September 14. Six of the 150 stations were inoperable, often because they were run over by a tractor or road grader. Survey results for the Morris WMD over the past 7 years are shown in Table 5. Other species observed but not listed in the table included white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), birds, and small mammals.

1b. Studies and Investigations

American Bittern Behavior and Movement in West-Central Minnesota

Tammy Laney, a SCEP student stationed at Big Stone NWR, spent a second year studying the American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) in Big Stone and Lac qui Parle Counties. Final results are not yet available for this study, however some interesting field observations from 2001 include information about bittern migration. In 2000, Laney radio-collared six bitterns and this

past January two were found wintering in Florida. Four of the collared birds returned in May to where they were banded in west-central Minnesota the previous year.

Walleye Stocking as a Tool to Suppress Fathead Minnow Populations in Type V Wetlands in the Prairie Pothole Region of Minnesota

Fathead minnows (*Pimephales promelas*) influence the ecological characteristics of wetlands and shallow lakes in western Minnesota, often to the detriment of wetland-dependent organisms. The Minnesota DNR, Division of Fisheries, has initiated a study to assess the effectiveness of using walleye (*Stizostedion vitreum*) to control fathead minnow populations in permanent wetlands in western Minnesota. Sampling occurred this year on 18 study wetlands, including four in the Morris WMD: Froland, Stammer, and Hagstrom WPAs in Pope County, and Curran WPA in Big Stone County. Preliminary results indicate that walleye fry effectively suppressed fathead populations. The study will conclude in 2003.

1c. General Wildlife Observations

The winter of 2000-2001 was fairly hard on wildlife. The Minnesota DNR reported that pheasants and turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) had difficulty feeding because of the snow depth and presence of ice layers within the snow. The annual DNR August Roadside Pheasant Survey showed an over all decline in the Morris District from 2000 to 2001. White-tailed deer fared better, with stable populations reported. There was some winter kill in Pope County lakes surveyed by the DNR. In Mountain Lake, the winter kill was severe enough to warrant restocking of bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*) and largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) after ice-out. Nelson Lake and Lake Johanna had some winter kill of several game fish species but no restocking efforts were necessary in those lakes.

The first observation of migrating Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) this spring was March 14. Staff observed a major movement of birds into the area March 31-April 1, and the first waterfowl pairs were observed that week. The first goose broods observed in the District were seen May 15, while the first mallard broods were seen June 4.

Other interesting sightings by the staff included a river otter (*Lutra canadensis*) in the Pomme de Terre River (April 18), a common loon (*Gavia immer*) with a chick on Overby WPA (July 3), two marbled godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) pairs in Big Stone and Swift Counties (April 20), and several sightings of mature and immature bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) throughout the fall and winter.

HABITAT RESTORATION

2a. Wetland Restoration (On/Off Refuge)

Fourteen landowners participated in the private lands program enabling the restoration of 37 wetlands during FY 2001. Wetland restorations were completed in five of the eight counties in the District for a total of 115 wetland acres restored. Fifteen of the 37 restorations were covered or will be covered by some form of permanent easement, meaning they will never be drained again. The typical restoration averaged 3.11 acres per restoration in FY 2001 at an average cost of $392.93 per acre.

Repairs to dikes on wetland restoration projects completed in previous years were required on seven restoration projects involving 592 wetland acres. This year's repairs included: one dike damaged by muskrats, one spillway clean out of floating cattail bogs, one seeping dike and three tile lines removed that were not known to exist when the initial restorations were completed. Only $2,794.96 was spent on private lands repair projects this fiscal year.

One one-acre wetland was restored on the recently acquired Garfield WPA's Hanson Tract in Lac qui Parle County after a one year delay. The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District initially would not grant a permit for this project as it was within 150 feet of an adjoining landowner. The permit was granted after meeting with the entire watershed district board at the site.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR FY 2001 PROJECTS

Partners	Contribution
Ducks Unlimited	$10,186.80
Minnesota Waterfowl Association	6,840.00
Upper MN River Watershed District	3,429.87
Total	**$20,456.67**

Table 6 - Wetland Restorations - Morris WMD - FY 2001

	Permanent Fish and Wildlife Service Restorations				Other Permanent Restorations		10-year Agreement Restorations		Total Restorations	
	Easements		Fee							
County	**Basins**	**Acres**	**Basins**	**Acres**	**Basins**	**Acres**	**Basins**	**Acres**	**Basins**	**Acres**
Big Stone	0	0	5	15	0	0	1	3	6	18
Chippewa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lac qui Parle	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	6	4	8
Pope	4	28	0	0	0	0	7	14	11	46
Stevens	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7	7	7
Swift	3	13	0	0	0	0	7	24	10	37
Traverse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yellow Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total FY 2001	7	41	6	16	1	1	24	54	38	116

Table 7 - Wetland Restorations - Morris WMD - 1996 - FY 2001

	CRP Restorations		Other Restorations		Total Restorations	
	Basins	Acres	Basins	Acres	Basins	Acres
FY 2001	-	-	-	-	38	116
FY 2000	-	-	-	-	73	387
FY 1999	-	-	-	-	51	345
FY 1998	-	-	-	-	91	331
1/1 - 9/30/1997	16	39	31	418	**34**	**423**
FY 1996	16	39	26	90	**42**	**177**
TOTAL	**32**	**78**	**57**	**508**	**329**	**1779**
District Grand Total 1987 - present					**1170**	**5528**

2b. Upland Restorations

Grasslands consist of native prairie, planted native grass, introduced cool-season grass seedings, and legume plantings. Management practices include fire, grazing, and haying. Some fields have not had any active management for 20 years but still provide good cover. New fee and easement acquisition has provided the acreage for seeding each year. Occasionally newly acquired land is cash rented back to the original landowner. The purpose is to have soybeans

planted, which makes a good seed bed for native grasses and provides a means of controlling weeds.

Weed control on young seedings is critical. A combination of herbicide applications, mowing, burning, haying, and grazing are used to aid the establishment and maintenance of both native and cool-season grass seeding and legume stands. Part of the Vegetation Establishment Agreement for an easement is that a property owner is required to spray roundup 10-14 days before seeding. For native grass establishment and maintenance, prescribed burning reduces competition from unwanted cool-season grasses but may also stimulate broadleaf weeds. This may necessitate the subsequent application of herbicides or mechanical manipulations.

Native Seeding

This year, 405 acres were seeded to native grasses on two WPA's, three easement areas, and two private lands projects. The grass mixture used for the seedings varied; however, most consisted of big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*). Two cool-season natives, green needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*) and Canada wild rye (*Elymus canadensis*), were also added in small quantities. The seed used on the majority of Giese WPA was a native harvest from Norman County. Seeding occurred between early June and mid-July.

Table 8 - Native Grass Seedings - Morris WMD - 2001

County	Unit	Acres
Big Stone	Kveene	135
Lac qui Parle	Smith	10
Stevens	Doherty	2
Stevens	Giese WPA	154
Stevens	Loehr	8
Swift	Ahrndt	63
Traverse	Mosquito Ranch WPA	35
Total		**407**

Since 1973 the Morris Wetland Management District has planted 9,742 acres of native grasses. Plans are currently underway for the production of local eco type seed, both grasses and forbs. Within the next five years the goals are to establish production plots and to use local seed in a majority, if not all, of our native seeding.

The Morris WMD harvested native grass seed from the following areas:

Table 9 - Harvested Native Grass Seed - Morris WMD - 2001

		Pounds			Harvest
WPA	**Species**	**Harvested Seed**	**Germ**	**Purity**	**Date**
Henry	mix -BB,SW,IN	2400	%	%	9/24
Hillman	Native Harvest	650	--	--	9/13,10/4
Several WPA's	grasses & forbs hand harvest	See Note *			Aug-Oct

*Note: Some of the hand harvested species include: side oats grama, lead plant, purple/white prairie clovers, pale purple cone flower, onion, bergamont, Liatris sp., bedstraw, Zizia sp., yellow cone flower, wild garlic, cinquefoil, and Anemone sp. Amounts varied from <1 oz. - 13 lbs.

Native Prairie

The original upland vegetation within the Morris District was tallgrass prairie. The total native prairie acreage on WPA's within the District was approximately 7,025 in 2001. The areas vary in size from less than one acre to 424 acres. Active management consisting of prescribed burning, grazing, and haying have been limited to the larger acreage. The small remnants have not been actively managed because of size, location, and staff time.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

3a. Water Level Management

The District continues to manage 29 water control structures on 943 wetland acres on WPA's within a surrounding four county area. Two water control structures under easement on private land are also maintained and managed.

We analyze our water management by monthly observations and annual aerial photography. Aerial photos are taken of each pool in late August or early September. This photography is a great tool to help us make water management decisions for the upcoming year.

The primary management of all wetlands is for waterfowl production. We consider the association of the managed wetland with the surrounding wetland complex. Management goals include spring food production and habitat for breeding pairs, brood rearing, and fall migration.

For the past several years we have initiated complete draw downs on several wetlands. We have seen excellent vegetative response on a vast majority of these basins. A very wet 2001 spring provided for good hemi marsh conditions. Most control structures will be left as is in 2002. Sherstad Slough and Chokio WPAs will remain in draw down.

There were also six beaver exclusion devices in place at water control structures. These structures worked great and have saved many hours of beaver dam removal.

Miscellaneous repairs were done on several structures. Board maintenance and replacement is scheduled for the upcoming year.

3b. Haying

Haying has been used for upland habitat management and noxious weed control on a limited basis. It has been used primarily on pure stands of alfalfa and cool-season grass stands. The annual manipulation keeps the alfalfa in a more vigorous condition. Haying is normally delayed until after July 15 to allow for duck nests to hatch. On newer seedings, haying may take place earlier to eliminate a serious noxious weed problem. No second cutting occurred in 2001.

Table 10 - Haying Summary - Morris WMD - 2001

County/WPA	First Cutting	Acres
Big Stone		
Anderson	07/26	21
Odden	07/26	120
Olson	08/10	80
Lac qui Parle		
Freeland	08/03	40
Bolson Slough	08/28	72
Florida Creek	08/03	24
Colbert	08/10	24
Farrell	08/10	57
Pope		
Rolling Forks	07/28	10
Westport	07/28	48
Walden	07/28	19
Stevens		
Thorstad	07/26	33
Swift		
Fahl	07/28	58
Monson Lake	08/11	39
Brady	08/28	73

Traverse		
Robinhood	08/28	47
Diekmann	08/13	98
Yellow Medicine		
Spellman Lake	08/28	80
Easement		
Suckow east.	08/06	31
Smith FmHA	08/01	11
Total		**985**

3c. Grazing

We also use controlled grazing as a grassland management tool. The objectives of grazing are to reduce litter buildup and reduce competition from cool-season grass invaders. A high concentration of livestock is needed to remove a dense litter buildup and the new growth in a 30-day period of time. Grazing generally does not begin until mid-April for two reasons:

- Most permittees are not through calving until May 1.
- The combination of spring rains and high AUM's can cause degradation of the sod.

Due to a very wet 2001 spring, cattle were not allowed to graze until late April and several WPA's were not grazed due to the wet conditions.

Table 11 - Grazing Summary - Morris WMD - 2001

County/WPA	Acres	AUMs	Fee/AUM	Grazing Period
Big Stone				
Hillman	86	65	$2.75	4/21-5/22
Hillman	126	30	$2.75	4/20-5/24
Thomson	64	44	$2.75	5/01-5/31

Pope				
Ouren	58	36	$2.75	4/20-5/26
Swift				
Gilbertson	41	35	$2.75	4/20-5/25
Appleton	67	15	$2.75	4/20-5/20
Appleton			$2.75	8/04-9/29
Rice	40	25	$2.75	8/11-9/09
Total	**482**			

The grazing period varied from a 30-day to a 50-day period and two late summer graze took place. There is a good working relationship with our permittees. Grazing on WPA's gives their pastures a break. However, it is becoming more difficult to find permittees as each year there are fewer cow/calf operations. Grazing is targeted most often to native prairie. Areas are normally grazed two years in a row and then rested for three to five years.

3d. Farming

In 2001, 914 acres of cropland were managed as resident wildlife food plots or were cooperatively farmed for seed bed preparations. The food plots are located on waterfowl production areas identified by the Minnesota DNR as significant wintering areas for ring-necked pheasants and white-tailed deer.

All food plots were located near shelterbelts and/or cattail sloughs which provided escape and winter cover. Plots were located on soils not classified as highly erodible land which have minimal soil loss potential. Soybeans are used in the rotation to break insect or disease cycles associated with repeated corn growth. The cooperator is responsible for all field work, seed, fertilizer, and weed control. One third of the plot is left standing in the field in alternate strips. The alternate strips help disperse snow and reduce the chances of the entire plot being buried in snow. The cooperator is allowed to harvest any corn or soybeans remaining the following spring.

Table 12 - Farming Summary (Food Plots) - Morris WMD - 2001

County	No. of WPAs With Food Plots	Total Acres in Corn, Soybeans
Big Stone	9	133
Lac qui Parle	1	10
Pope	4	70
Stevens	11	102
Swift	5	61
Traverse	4	84
Yellow Medicine	2	22
Total	**36**	**482**

The Stevens County Pheasants Forever chapter financed a winter food plot on Pomme de Terre River WPA and feeder cribs throughout the county, predominantly on private land.

3f. Fire Management

Favorable weather conditions helped the Morris staff burn 2575.4 acres in FY 2001. Most of the acres (2,313.4) were completed in the spring and 262 acres were completed in late summer. Three firefighters from refuges in Texas were detailed in during the spring to supplement the Morris crew. No fall burns were conducted because of a Level V for National Preparedness Level.

Don Lantz was hired in June to fill a newly created Prescribed Fire Specialist position. He participated this year in fire details in Nevada and Washington.

Table 13 - Prescribed Burn Summary - Morris WMD - FY 2001

County/WPA	Date Burned	Acres Burned
Big Stone County		
Johnson WPA	4/26	85.6
Henry WPA	4/26	79.8
Barry Lake WPA	4/30	143.8
O'Connell WPA	4/30	27
Bauman WPA	5/03	53.2
Eids Lutheran WPA	5/03	41.8
Boehnke WPA	5/04	38.6
Twin Lakes WPA	5/12	388.7
Wiese Easement	5/15	90
Redhead Marsh WPA	5/18	219.4
Lac qui Parle County		
Borass WPA	5/05	9.9
Pope County		
Westport WPA	4/25	40.1
Ben Wade WPA	5/09	66
Benson Lake WPA	5/10	82.4

Horse Lake WPA	5/11	134.8
Ann Lake WPA	5/11	62.1
Ben Wade WPA	5/14	100.5
Stammer WPA	5/14	111.3
Gjerdingen WPA	5/16	51.3
Stenerson Lake WPA	9/26	175
Stenerson Lake WPA	9/28	75
Stevens County		
Fitzgerald WPA	4/24	14.1
Mau WPA	5/02	38.9
Edwards WPA	5/30	46.6
Edwards Predator Fence	9/27	12
Swift County		
Stock WPA	5/02	9.8
Hoffman WPA	5/13	45.3
Traverse County		
Geyer WPA	4/27	332.4
TOTAL		**2,575.4**

Wildfires

Svor WPA: On October 11, 2000 a fire was started by a neighbor to the south burning a trash pile. Personnel from the Morris WMD, Fergus Falls WMD, and Big Stone Refuge responded. Units from the Benson and Murdock VFD's helped with the suppression operations. The fire burned 686 acres on the WPA and 161 acres on private land.

Hillman WPA: On April 18, 2001 the Big Stone County Sheriffs Department reported a fire on the Hillman WPA. Units from the Odessa VFD responded and quickly extinguished the fire. The fire burned 80 acres on the WPA. The cause of the ignition was not determined.

Equipment

Several new pieces of equipment were received to help upgrade and expand the prescribed and wildfire capabilities of the District. Parts for a Type VI engine were received during the summer and fall and will be assembled this winter for use this coming spring. A Messek track vehicle manufactured by Gyro-Trac was also delivered. It has low ground pressure tracks, a 400 gallon pump package, and came with a rotary mower for constructing fire lines. This

should add greater flexibility to the fire program and make fire operations in damp areas easier and safer.

3g. Pest Plant Control

Spraying and Mowing

The control of noxious weeds continues to be a priority for the staff both in the amount of time and the amount of funds spent on the various methods of control. We continue to use an integrated approach utilizing mechanical, chemical, and biological controls. District staff spent over 350 hours in FY01 on mowing and spraying WPA's in the eight county area. Fourteen units were mowed, 36 were sprayed with either a boom or ATV sprayer and two were contracted to a local co-op. Canada thistle continues to receive the majority of the effort but time was also spent mowing sweet clover and spraying crop fields in preparation for seeding with native grasses. We received 18 complaint calls compared to eight last year. Extra time was spent in Traverse County due to a complaint made to Congressman Colin Peterson by the county board. After meeting with several Traverse county officials in August, it appears that we have done a satisfactory job for this field season.

The Regional Hydro axe was utilized on three WPA's. The machine removed woody vegetation from over 320 acres of native prairie.

Table 14 - Noxious Weed Control - Morris WMD - 2001

	Contract Spraying		Force Account Spraying		Mowing		Totals	
County	**WPA**	**Acre**	**WPA**	**Acre**	**WPA**	**Acre**	**WPAs**	**Acres**
Big Stone	0	0	6	137	5	134	11	271
Chippewa	0	0	0	0	1	35	1	35
LQ Parle	0	0	2	135	0	0	2	135
Pope	0	0	5	145	1	43	6	188
Stevens	0	0	13	333	5	134	18	467
Swift	0	0	2	4	0	0	2	4
Traverse	0	0	8	425	1	49	9	474
Yellow Med	2	145	0	0	1	2	3	147

2001 Total	2	145	36	1179	14	397	52	1721
2000 Total	0	0	24	687	13	521	37	1208
1999 Total	3	380	68	834	19	420	90	1634

Biological Control

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Control for loosestrife started in 1997 with the raising and release of loosestrife beetles (*Galerercella calmariensis* and/or *Galerucella pusilla*). This year 334 adult beetles were hand collected from Nelson Lake WPA and released at Ouren WPA and Nelson Lake WPA in Pope County. More were released at Darnen WPA in Stevens County.

The insects are staring to do their job. The beetle populations are booming at several WPA sites, sometimes reducing loosestrife infestations. On infestations at Kolstad Lake, Nelson Lake, and Overby insects are stunting loosestrife, reducing seed production, and even killing plants. Overby WPA's beetles were released in July, 1997 and 1998. The pictures on page 26 show the process of loosestrife beetle bio-control.

Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula L.*)

The leafy spurge bio-control project began in 1996 with the introduction of the flea beetle, *Aphthona lacetosa, Aphthona czwalinea,* and *Aphthona flava* as an agent for biological control in the District onto WPA's. Beetles are harvested from established populations and released in other leafy spurge problem areas. Morris District's population of beetles have become so numerous that other Wetland Districts in the region were invited to collect from our collection areas. Morris WMD harvested **899,000,000** flea beetles from six WPA's as follows:

Table 15 - Beetles Harvested From WPA's

County	WPA	Morris WMD	Big Stone NWR	Fergus Falls WMD	Litchfield WMD	Total beetles harvested

Swift	Loen	185,500	500	170,000	21,000	377,000
Swift	Lynch Lake	350,000				350,000
Traverse	Paul	50,000				50,000
Traverse	Mosquito Ranch	5,000				5,000
Yellow Med.	Dakota	2,000				2,000
Big Stone	Stegner	45,000	70,000			115,000

During the summer 637,500 beetles were released onto 15 (7 new and 8 existing) WPA's on 25 sites. To date, beetles are at 114 release sites on 31 WPA's which total 11,835,007 acres of which 398 are infested with leafy spurge.

Table 16 - Flea Beetle Release - Morris WMD - FY2001

County/WPA	No. of WPAs	No. of Sites	No. Released
Big Stone	**3**	**7**	**135,000**
Thomson		3	45,000
Barry Lake		3	25,000
Karsky		1	25,000
Pope	**2**	**2**	**10,000**
Heidebrink			5,000
Avok Slough		1	5,000

Stevens	**2**	**4**	**115,500**
Hancock		2	500
Weiler		2	110,000
Swift	**1**	**4**	**70,000**
Fahl		4	70,000
Traverse	**5**	**6**	**305,000**
Paul		1	50,000
Mosquito		0	10,000
Murphy		2	70,000
Jenk		1	25,000
Lawrence		3	150,000
Yellow Medicine	**1**	**2**	**2,000**
Dakota		2	2,000
TOTAL	**14**	**25**	**637,500**

The procedure for monitoring flea beetle populations at release sites allows cooperators to focus on harvesting and releasing insects while still being able to provide Minnesota Cooperative Biological Weed Control program with information. Four sites in the District are to be protected and monitored for up to seven years. Monitoring is conducted with a 15 inch sweep net at points in north, south, east, and west directions at 0, 5, 10, 15, and 20 foot intervals. Flea beetles are counted after each sweep and recorded. Sites were sampled once during the year. Four sites with beetles have been monitored by Sweep Net Sampling as follows:

Table 17 - Flea Beetle Sampling Results

Sample No.	WPA Site	1998 Results	1999 Results	2000 Results	2001 Results
1	Loen 4	6/17 3	6/9 0	7/12 48 *	6/2 680
2	Loen 4	not done	6/23 2		7/10 203
3	Loen 4	7/13 1	not done		

1	Lynch Lk 4		6/9 0	6/22 197	6/26 195
2	Lynch Lk 4		6/23 184		
3	Lynch Lk 4		7/12 9		
1	Taylor 1		6/7 0	6/29 689	7/9 250-350
2	Taylor 1		65		
3	Taylor 1		7/15 0		
	Stegner 1			6/26 10	7/11 0

*The 3 sampling requirement was dropped after 1999. At Stegner WPA sample site #1, leafy spurge has been suppressed; however, beetles moved to new areas on the unit.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

4a. Bird Banding

Morris staff assisted with two bird banding efforts in FY2001. In July three staff members worked with the Minnesota DNR to band approximately 180 Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) as part of an effort to determine whether the local breeding population is being harvested during the early goose season. In August, one staff member assisted Big Stone NWR staff with a shorebird banding project. The 115 shorebirds banded and color-tagged included least sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*), pectoral sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*), semipalmated sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*), and spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*).

4b. Disease Monitoring and Treatment

Disease Monitoring

Nothing to report

Wildlife Treatment

Table 18 – Wildlife Treatment and Salvage, Morris WMD - FY2001

Date	Common Name	Scientific Name	Action
11/02/2000	Snowy owl	*Nyctea scandiaca*	Taken to rehabilitation
11/03/2000	Lapland longspur	*Calcarius lapponicus*	Saved for station collection
11/13/2000	Northern saw-whet owl	*Aegolius acadicus*	Taken to rehabilitation
03/19/2001	Great horned owl	*Bubo virginianus*	Disposed
06/29/2001	American kestrel	*Falco sparverius*	Taken to rehabilitation
07/26/2001	Least bittern	*Ixobrychus exilis*	Saved for station collection
07/27/2001	Cooper's hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*	Taken to rehabilitation
08/14/2001	Barn swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	Saved for station collection
09/06/2001	Eastern kingbird	*Tyrannus tyrannus*	Saved for station collection

4c. Re-introductions

The Morris WMD continued its involvement with an effort to re-establish a greater prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) population in southwestern Minnesota. This project is a cooperative endeavor of the Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, The Nature Conservancy, and Pheasants Forever. From 1999 to 2001, 152 greater prairie chickens were relocated from northwestern Minnesota to seven locations in southwestern Minnesota (see Table 19).

Table 19 – Number of Greater Prairie Chickens Released at Each Relocation Site 1999-2001

	Number Released			
Location	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**All Years**

Chippewa Prairie – Chippewa County	16	18	0	34
Hastad/Hegland WPAs – Lac qui Parle County	9	4	0	13
Plover Prairie – Lac qui Parle County	18	16	0	34
Big Stone NWR – Big Stone County	10	0	0	10
Sleeping Bison – Big Stone County	0	15	0	15
Victory WMA – Big Stone County	0	7	17	24
Lawrence WPA – Traverse County	0	0	22	22
All Locations	**53**	**60**	**39**	**152**

Birds were individually radio-marked so that researchers could document movement, survival, and mortality factors. Survival from the time of release to the following spring was 34 percent in 1999-2000 and 37 percent in 2000-2001. It appears that raptor predation was the main mortality factor for the relocated birds.

Two booming grounds were located in 2000, one at Chippewa Prairie and one at Plover Prairie. These same booming grounds were used in 2001. No new booming grounds were established this year because birds from the other release sites moved to the established booming grounds. Six nests were located in 2001, three of which hatched. Interestingly, one of the nests hatched both prairie chicken and ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) eggs.

The releases in 2001 were influenced by the unexpected movement among release areas discussed above. Seventeen birds were released at Victory WMA to augment the existing population in that area. Twenty-two additional birds were released at Lawrence WPA, in southern Traverse County. This grassland block was chosen because 1) efforts to establish a new booming ground will likely be more successful since Lawrence WPA is more than 30 miles northwest of the established booming grounds, and 2) a viable population in this area will promote the ultimate goal of linking the re-established greater prairie chicken population with the source population in northwestern Minnesota.

4d. Nest Structures

Morris WMD has two main goals in its station's nest structure program. To maintain

approximately 300 nest structures on WPA's within the District and to distribute nest structures to cooperators with reliable instructions for placement and maintenance. The cooperators must be willing to set up and maintain the structures on private lands. The structures, including mounting post and bracket, predator guard and hardware are given away through the station's private lands program. The mounting posts are used sign posts supplied free by the local State Department of Transportation office. This has been a very successful and well received program by the public. In FY 2001 we gave away 246 cylinders to participants. Since the inception of the program in 1995, we have distributed 1,049 nest cylinders.

High water during the recent years of a wet cycle has damaged or inundated about 20 percent of the 300 structures we strive to keep in service on WPA's. As water recedes, we repair or relocate the structures as appropriate. Structures are maintained during the winter months when ice conditions warrant. During FY 2001, 116 waterfowl nests were initiated on 97 out of 248 structures available on WPA's. Approximately 85 percent of the structures contain two nesting sites or cylinders per structure. Although detailed records are not kept of nest success rates because of difficulty in determining nest fate during the winter months, it appears that 80-90 percent of the nests successfully hatch. Abandonment appears to be the major cause for unsuccessful nesting attempts. Nest structures do work to produce ducks, but as with all management tools, there is a cost of staff time and money and a limit to how much can be accomplished.

4e. Pest, Predator, and Exotic Animal Control

Goose Depredation

In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota DNR, Morris WMD responded to giant Canada goose damage complaints in cropland adjacent to WPA's. Biological Technician Buchholz was assigned as the District's contact for goose damage complaints.

The number of complaints were significantly down in 2001. Area biologists believe the high water conditions in the spring flooded nests, resulting in poor nest success. Morris WMD staff did little active management such as mowing or baiting due to the lack of effectiveness in previous years. Technician Buchholz did mailings regarding a Minnesota Waterfowl Association (WMA) food plot program specifically targeting goose depredation areas. Six landowners responded with interest in the program and were referred to WMA.

Morris WMD directly responded to five complaints. The majority of the complaints received were regarding large groups of adolescent birds. With minimal hazing, most of these geese left the area and were of little concern. Many other complaints that originated adjacent to WPA's were handled by Minnesota DNR. Our task when responding to complaints was to explain all available options to the landowner. Short-term solutions discussed were hazing/scare tactics, fencing and shooting permits. Long term solutions such as enrolling in CRP buffers and different crop rotations were also discussed. The majority of landowners chose shooting permits as their abatement method. Shooting permits were issued by the local wildlife manager. Table 20 contains shooting permits issued by county and geese taken.

Table 20 - Goose Complaints and Shooting Permits in Morris WMD - 2001

County	Complaints	Shooting Permits Issued	Geese Killed
Big Stone	9	5	26
Chippewa	0	0	0
Lac qui Parle	1	0	0
Pope	23	15	6
Stevens	15	11	21
Swift	14	11	31
Traverse	2	0	0
Yellow Medicine	0	0	0
TOTAL	**64**	**42**	**84**

It is likely that responding to goose damage complaints will continue to be a part of our workload in coming years. It does appear past management may be contributing in a positive way toward controlling goose populations. Time will tell.

Beaver

There was one high water complaint this year that was the result of a beaver plugging a culvert on Nelson Lake WPA, Pope County. The plug was removed by hand in May, 2001. One beaver was trapped at this location. A second beaver was removed from Larson WPA, Pope County. One water control structure on Loen WPA was also plugged, no beaver removed.

Other

One electric predator fence which encloses approximately 16 acres on Edwards WPA is maintained each year. A fall 2001 burn was conducted to stimulate vegetative growth.

COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

5a. Interagency Coordination

STEP student Rondeau spent 114 hours assisting the Soil and Water Conservation District offices in Stevens, Swift, and Lac qui Parle counties surveying wetland restoration projects associated with CREP easements.

Staff members Haugen and Henderson spent 120 hours assisting the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Swift and Traverse counties reviewing and surveying CP23 wetland restoration projects. This included feasibility determinations and wetland restoration designs. Ten CP23 wetlands were restored in Swift county and two in Traverse county under the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Agriculture, and Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

Henderson spent two weeks and Rondeau three weeks assisting Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge and the NRCS surveying CP23 wetland restoration projects in Pennington and Marshall counties.

Oglesby and Haugen provided assistance to the City of Benson and the Benson High School in the planning and development of 140 acre Ambush Park, a city park, into an environmental outdoor learning center for the school and park users.

Staff members participated in on-going county conservation review group meetings and county water planning meetings. Vacek attended the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Clean Water Partnership and Pomme de Terre Water Plan meetings.

Staff members worked with other agencies that included Soil and Water Conservation Districts, local watershed boards, NRCS, County Highway Departments, landowners, etc. on water related issues.

5b. Tribal Coordination

Nothing to report

5c. Private Land Activities

The Morris WMD had 2.25 full time FTE's for the private lands program during FY 2001. Funding for the program generally comes from the Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife program, Challenge Cost Share program, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and private donations. The FY 2001 budget was $69,500 with an additional $4,000 from the Regional Cost Share Program, $3,000 from the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and $20,456 from private donations and/or partners. This budget covers salary for 1.25 FTE's, supplies, prairie and wetland restoration costs as well as repairs on past projects.

Teressa Rondeau was hired in June on a three month temporary appointment to promote the Minnesota River Watershed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) administered by the Department of Agriculture. Under CREP, landowners could place permanent easements on restored wetlands and associated uplands as well as upland buffers around existing wetlands. Teressa reviewed adjoining properties to all WPA's in Stevens and Swift counties for potential wetland restorations and upland buffers associated with both restored and existing wetlands. Through soils maps and aerial photo interpretation Teressa identified twenty landowners with property adjacent to WPA's which were eligible for CREP easements. A letter explaining the CREP program along with potential easement boundaries and estimated easement payment was mailed to each landowner. Responses for additional information were received from about 20 percent of the landowners.

In 1997 the Pope County Environmental Services Office asked us to work with them on a water quality improvement project for the watershed of Trappers Run Creek. The creek is a primary watershed for Pelican Lake and Lake Minnewaska. They had identified a number of potential wetland restoration projects in the watershed. Our part, on true wetland restorations, is to secure the wetland easement, design and complete the construction project, and pay restoration costs. There was no activity on this project this year.

Our partnership with the Niemackel Lake watershed project continued. Although no wetlands were restored for the project this year, one eight-acre field buffering a wetland was seeded to

native prairie grasses.

Our on-going relationship with the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District and Big Stone County continued in FY 2001 led by Kyle Kirkeby's fourth grade class at Ortonville Public School. Mr. Kirkeby's fourth grade class, for seven years running, has held fund raisers for wetland restoration projects through the sale of candy and student chewing gum permits. The class adopts a wetland restoration project identified by the Morris WMD, and funnels the fund raising proceeds through the Citizens for Big Stone Lake to the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District. The money is then donated to the Morris WMD Partners for Wildlife Program and submitted for a match through the Region's Challenge Grant Program. The past four years, the Big Stone County Water Plan has joined in on the school's fund raising activities by matching their fund raising total.

Kirkeby's fourth grade class raised $1,500 this past year through the sale of candy and student chewing gum permits. The Citizens for Big Stone Lake, the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District and the Big Stone County Water Plan, working as partners and recognizing the efforts of the kids, each donated $2,000 toward the project for a fund raising total of $7,500. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan added another $3,000 to the project through Regional Challenge Grant program for a fund raising total of $10,500.

Private Lands Grass Drills

In 1997, the Morris WMD Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program purchased two Dura Tech Haybuster grass drills. The money to purchase the drills was raised from donations from Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, Stevens County Pheasants Forever Chapter, and the Yellow Medicine County Soil and Water Conservation District. These donations were matched through the Service's Challenge Cost Share Program with the remaining balance coming from the Upper Mississippi River Headwaters/Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem.

Table 21 - Private Lands Seedings

Year	Number of Landowners	Number of Acres Seeded
2001	31	1229
2000	53	2046
1999	27	969
1998	41	1840
1997	16	360

The number of landowners and acres seeded decreased this year. This decease in use was due to the lower number of CRP acres that remained to be seeded. Even with the decrease in use, the demand for the Morris drills remained high and kept Biologist Henderson hustling throughout the spring. Fortunately, we were able to provide this service to 31 landowners, who in turn planted approximately 1,229 acres to a quality grass cover, primarily a warm-season native grass mix. Over 300 staff hours were expended to coordinate, transport and perform maintenance on the drills.

Swampbuster

From 1985 to 1995 the swampbuster provisions of the Farm Bill legislation had mandated Service involvement in wetland appeals, exemption requests, turn-ins of potential wetland conversion violations, minimal effect/drainage maintenance/mitigation requests, and the wetland reserve program. However, the 1995 rules diminished the Service's role to one of voluntary invited involvement and effectively left the Service with very little ability to protect wetlands via the potentially very effective USDA authority.

We turned in one priority potential swampbuster violations in FY 2001. At Morris we feel it is important to document, challenge, and assist USDA in carrying out their wetland protection obligations imposed by swampbuster. This view often generates controversy.

Swampbuster, combined with Corps of Engineers 404 authority and the Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act, did much to curb drainage during the late 1980's and early 1990's. However, word of relaxed rules has spurred renewed drainage interest throughout the area.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

6a. Law Enforcement

Three people on the Morris staff had law enforcement authority during the year; they were officers Lewis, Gaunitz and Moos. Assistant Manager Gaunitz entered on duty in August.

Most enforcement activities are associated with wetland drainage or WPA use regulations. Citations are seldom issued in resolving most issues but the training and the authority to cite or arrest an individual are essential elements to resolving conflicts and carrying out land management responsibilities. With over 50,000 fee title acres in small parcels scattered through eight counties, easement rights along with reports and observations of potential illegal drainage on private lands, there is no shortage of conflicts to deal with. State Conservation Officers carry the primary responsibility for hunting season enforcement in our eight counties. We maintain a good rapport with state officers working cooperatively during fall hunting seasons and providing assistance when requested.

In FY 2001 Refuge Officers issued 2 federal citations and assisted the state conservation officers with 17 citations and 12 written warnings.

Waterfowl Production Areas

Most WPA management problems are detected during routine work activities, easement surveillance flights, or are brought to our attention by the public. Typical and recurring issues include farming encroachment, rock dumping, vandalism, vehicle trespass, dead animal and/or garbage dumping, and private drainage affecting WPA wetlands.

When possible, problems caused by neighboring landowners or renters are resolved amicably. Legal action is a last resort.

Most notable citations this year were a vehicle trespass and unauthorized drainage problem on Lee WPA, Stevens County, and destruction of federal property (signs) on Ann Lake WPA, Pope County.

Monitoring continues on Dakota WPA in Yellow Medicine County. Due to concerns about potential surface water impacts from installation of a controversial high volume rural water system well in Yellow Medicine County, the Service required monitoring to begin in 1995 via test wells, a staff gauge and a weir on nearby Dakota WPA. Readings are collected and

forwarded to Minnesota DNR hydrologists who have the lead in this issue. Since the monitoring began there has been no cause for alarm. However, recent years have been exceptionally wet and monitoring will continue until there is assurance of non-impact.

6b. Permits and Economic Use Management

During fiscal year 2001, we issued 32 special use permits. All of these permits were issued for cutting of hay, grazing, or cash rent (covered in Habitat Management, Section 3b,c,d).

6c. Contaminant Investigations

Darnen WPA Water Quality Monitoring

In the summer of 2001, the City of Morris began construction to expand an existing industrial park. Included with this work is a stormwater drainage system that empties into a ditch running through a wetland basin on Darnen WPA (see photo). Although the stormwater runoff will first go through a sedimentation pond, the Morris WMD is concerned about how the runoff might affect the wetland. Starting in the fall of 2001, water quality samples and fixed point photographs were taken at two sites in the Darnen WPA wetland. Staff will monitor the wetland for several years to ensure there are no harmful effects from the stormwater drainage system.

6f. Cultural Resource Management

A Phase I archaeological survey of the Giese WPA in Stevens County was performed prior to a land exchange with Ralph Smith. Archaeologists found seven previously unrecorded sites and collected 19 artifacts that were sent to the Minnesota Historical Society for storage. Four of the sites were considered by the archaeologist to be potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

It was determined that the land exchange would have no negative impacts on the existing historical sites so the exchange was allowed to proceed.

6g. Land Acquisition Support

Fee Title

We only acquired one fee-title tract in 2001. We also accomplished one fee-title exchange in which we traded some upland in exchange for part of a drained wetland we plan to restore. There was little interest among landowners in selling land to the government. Perhaps the tenuous farm economy or the myriad of set-aside and easement programs reduced the interest in fee-title sales. The one tract we bought is an outstanding roundout to Rothi WPA in Big Stone County. During the year several possible new fee opportunities arose that we will pursue in 2002 but all of these opportunities are in Big Stone County. Hopefully there will be more willing sellers in other counties next year. The current fee ownership of 50,615 acres represents 67.6 percent of the goal acres of the Morris Wetland Management District.

Table 22 - Waterfowl Production Area Realty Acreage - 2001

County	Units	Realty Acres	Goal Acres
Big Stone	59	10,844.92	15,600
Chippewa	1	244.1	---
Lac qui Parle	18	4,010.4	6,600
Pope	64	12,917.5	21,000
Stevens	55	9,648.1	12,850
Swift	30	7,608.9	10,800
Traverse	12	4,105.2	6,720
Yellow Medicine	5	959.6	1,260
Total	**244**	**50,338.72**	**74,830**

***Table 23 - Waterfowl Production Area Managed Acreage**

Morris WMD - 2001

	Managed Acres 9/30/00		Managed Acres 9/30/01	
County	Units	Acres	Units	Acres
Big Stone	59	10,776.3	59	10,943.02
Chippewa	1	244.3	1	244.3
Lac qui Parle	18	3,991.9	18	3,991.9
Pope	64	13,004.5	64	13,004.5
Stevens	55	9,686.7	55	9,679.7
Swift	30	7,653.4	30	7,653.4
Traverse	12	4,141.8	12	4,141.8
Yellow Medicine	5	956.3	5	956.3
Total	**244**	**50,455.2**	**244**	**50,614.92**

*Keeping an accurate tally of the acreage of so many units is difficult. The acres recorded as purchased in real estate records are shown in Table 22 above. The actual acres we manage do not precisely match real estate records. The two most common reasons are land use lines that differ from legal descriptions and land within the boundaries of a meandered lake. Although the Service does not technically own the land within the meander line, water levels are often low enough that we end up managing a fringe of land between the meander line and the water's edge.

The legislation authorizing purchase of WPAs requires the Service to receive approval by the state involved. In Minnesota, the state makes its decision to approve or deny acquisition tract-by-tract through a decision by the Land Exchange Board. Land Exchange Board members are the Governor, State Auditor, and State Attorney General. Before going to the Land Exchange Board, we seek concurrence from the Board of Commissioners of the affected county. We delicately call the county process "certification" and not "approval." With county certification, Land Exchange Board approval is almost automatic. Without local certification, acquisition approval is less assured. As a result, we spend much time discussing each fee and easement tract with local counties who use the forum strategically, and occasionally maliciously, to raise concerns on everything from the importance of WPAs to the relevance of the Federal government. Weeds, taxes, and water issues are favorite subjects. While the meetings are sometimes unpleasant, they do force the staff to hear and consider local concerns regarding management of federal land. Land acquisition is almost always controversial anywhere in the country. On wetland management districts though, we acquire land each year and thus the difficult relationships that often arise from land acquisition never have a chance to completely

heal before the next acquisition project.

The continuing low annual revenue sharing payments and other problems make it difficult to obtain county certification and discourage the wetland district manager from being aggressive in pursuing fee areas. More emphasis on wetland and habitat easements also reduced the time available for realty staff to work on fee tracts. We have not actively sought many fee projects recently but have vigorously pursued desirable walk-in cases.

The long-term future of fee acquisition is unknown. The farm economy, revenue sharing, Service staff time, acquisition funding, Land Exchange Board attitude, emphasis on easement work, and many other factors will influence its future. With the continued degradation of the habitat base on private land, fee-title acquisition is more important than ever.

The tax loss issue continues to be one of the Service's greatest hurdles to land acquisition. A trust fund payment is made to the County government with each new fee purchase where revenue sharing is short. The interest from the trust fund payment, when invested at the current one-year treasury bill rate, should make up the difference between the revenue sharing payments and the taxes that would be paid on land if it remained private property.

The payments are only made in cases where the estimated revenue sharing payment for the land is less than the current taxes on the property. It is up to the counties to decide what to do with the payments. Previously purchased lands are not covered by this new plan. The County Commissioners appreciate this change in the Service's program but don't consider it the answer to the revenue sharing problem and "all our back taxes."

Removing cropland from agricultural production is the other major concern that is becoming more popular with local citizens and the Commissioners opposing our program. Commissioners from various counties frequently raise concerns of losing cropland acres for local farmers. Cropland loss is also used as an argument against our habitat (grassland) easements or wetland easements involving wetland restoration.

Table 24 - Revenue Sharing Payments - Morris WMD

County	FY99	FY00	FY01
Big Stone	$24,573	$21,624	$*
Chippewa	552	574	
Lac qui Parle	8,152	7,151	
Pope	33,516	29,402	
Stevens	31,081	27,265	
Swift	20,278	19,567	
Traverse	11,660	11,259	
Yellow Medicine	3,243	2,845	
Total	**$133,055**	**$119,687**	

*Payments for 2001 have not yet been received.

Revenue sharing payments (so-called "in lieu of tax payments") are important to our acquisition program. The Commissioners are understandably interested in the annual payment their county receives and they are concerned about decreasing payments. For example, despite no change in the number of federally owned acres in Pope County, our revenue sharing payments decreased by $6,500 from 1998 to 2000. In 2000, counties received only 50.8 percent of the amount prescribed by the revenue sharing formula (3/4 of 1 percent of land value). It is tough to explain to counties why the government is not paying 100 percent of its revenue sharing commitment. Worse yet, we cannot even claim that the agency is seeking 100 percent payments since executive branch budget proposals often do not include sufficient money for 100 percent revenue sharing payments. Even at 100 percent of the revenue sharing formula, our payments to counties fall short of private property taxes in much of Minnesota. Of course, we make fewer demands on county resources than owners of private land. Our drain on county resources for infrastructure, human services, and law enforcement is minimal or absent. Still, while our net economic effect to most counties is almost certainly positive, it is difficult to get past the fact that we pay less than 100 percent of the expected and authorized amount.

Wetland Easements

We permanently protected 177 wetland acres with seven new wetland easements this year. Many of our new wetland easements arise from wetlands restored under our private lands program (section 5c). Last year we acquired sixteen new wetland easements.

Table 25 - Wetland Easement Program Status - 2001

County	Easements	Wetland Acres	Total Easement Acres	Total Goal Acres
Big Stone	191	6,580	24,255.25	42,640
Chippewa	1	40	120.00	0
Lac qui Parle	36	1,132	4,141.58	23,540
Pope	236	8,578	33,228.08	44,180
Stevens	52	1,666	4,492.08	6,090
Swift	59	1,306	4,635.40	14,540
Traverse	35	1,146	3,871.51	8,440
Yellow Medicine	8	158	559.27	7,860
Total 2001	**618**	**20,606**	**75,303.17**	**147,290**
Total 2000	**611**	**20,429**	**74,671.17**	**147,290**
Total 1999	**595**	**20,074**	**73,026.79**	**147,290**
Total 1998	**584**	**19,759**	**71,513.37**	**147,290**
Total 1997	**579**	**19,633**	**71,178.32**	**147,290**
Total 1996	**574**	**19,599**	**70,760.32**	**147,290**

Under the terms of a wetland easement, the Service purchases the rights to burn, drain, level, or fill wetlands from a willing seller. Easements of highest priority have been those which preserve wetlands within two miles of a Waterfowl Production Area. However, wetlands located near Minnesota DNR's Wildlife Management Areas or other acceptable habitat can also be protected by easement.

The future of the easement program continues to be directly related to funds and staff time available to our Division of Realty. We could take many more easements if we had staff time for making unsolicited easement contacts. Many wetlands are still available that need protection and the program remains popular with landowners.

The Commissioners must review all easement proposals for certification as with fee tracts. Easement certification has usually been routine in the past. However, opposition is increasing. The major objection is placing easements on restored wetlands that were previously considered cropland. Many Commissioners view that as a loss of productive agricultural land and are concerned that the conversion to marsh will reduce the tax revenue. All of the objections were handled at the field and none were elevated to the Land Exchange Board level.

Wildlife Habitat Protection Easements

The Fish and Wildlife Service introduced the Wildlife Habitat Protection Easement in 1993. This easement is aimed at maintaining grassland habitat adjacent to wetlands. While native prairie tracts receive the highest priority, we pursue easements on other grassland habitat too as long as the block provides significant waterfowl value.

Four types of the easement are available. The four options offer varying opportunities for grazing and limited haying; otherwise, the easement is very restrictive and allows virtually no uses except walking, hunting, and trapping. The landowner is required to pay taxes and control noxious weeds. The easement is perpetual with a one-time payment to the land-owner. Most landowners interested in this easement have preferred the most restrictive easement option with the most generous payment. Typically, they are either recreational landowners or no longer raise livestock and have no interest in grazing or haying their grasslands. While we frequently prefer to use this most restrictive easement, we occasionally insist on a less restrictive easement to meet our needs.

We purchased three habitat easements this year. The largest habitat easement we acquired is the 137 acre Ditterich tract in Traverse County. This easement protects grasslands around a series of wetlands that we restored in 1988.

Table 26 - Easements For Wildlife Habitat Protection Status - 2001

County	Easements	Acres
Big Stone	15	1,300.04
Chippewa	0	0.00
Lac qui Parle	7	542.30
Pope	6	271.15
Stevens	0	0.00
Swift	13	778.12
Traverse	1	137.00
Yellow Medicine	1	77.09
2001 Total	**43**	**3,105.70**
2000 Total	**40**	**2,832.59**
1999 Total	**27**	**1,787.35**
1998 Total	**25**	**1,743.98**
1997 Total	**18**	**1,181.64**
1996 Total	**16**	**1,094.64**

The habitat easements must have Commissioner review and Land Exchange Board certification in the same manner as the wetland easement. This new easement also counts against the goal easement acreage set for each Minnesota county.

Farmers Home Administration Conservation Easements

The former Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) is now part of the Farm Service Agency (FSA). For consistency, we continue to call easements related to their programs FmHA easements. Due to their small size, management activities on FmHA tracts are limited.

Table 27 - FmHA Easements - 2001

County	Easements	Easement Tracts*	Acres
Big Stone	1	1	4.82
Chippewa	1	1	63.20
Lac qui Parle	2	2	114.93
Pope	5	11	220.13
Stevens	1	2	73.55
Swift	10	17	418.12
Traverse	0	0	0.00
Yellow Medicine	3	9	342.48
Total	**23**	**43**	**1,237.23**

**Some easements contain more than one tract*

Changes to USDA rules and polices have all but eliminated opportunities to acquire FmHA easements. In 2001, we completed an agreement with FmHA that provides for Fish and Wildlife Service management of an 84.8 acre tract of wet native prairie in Lac qui Parle County under terms of a debt cancellation contract. In this case, the landowner was forgiven debt in exchange for granting a conservation easement to the Service. This easement abuts other prairie proposed for protection under the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge.

Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge

The Service received approval in 2000 to proceed with development of this new refuge along with $500,000 to begin land acquisition. The refuge concept is modeled after the small wetlands (WPA) program and aims to protect 77,000 acres of remaining native tallgrass prairie in scattered tracts in western Minnesota and northwest Iowa. Prairie protection will be through both fee-title and easement acquisition. Overall refuge coordination is provided by the Project

Leader at Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.

Various refuges and wetland management districts are responsible for coordinating acquisition and management of individual refuge units in designated counties. The Morris Wetland Management District is responsible for those units of the refuge that will fall within our eight county District. This year we purchased our first three tracts. All three are easements that prohibit tillage, grazing, haying, and certain other uses. The Service has the right to manage the vegetation to maintain the prairie.

Table 28 - Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Units

County	Fee Tracts	Fee Acres	Easement Tracts	Easement Acres	Total Tracts	Total Acres
Big Stone	0	0	1	105.86	1	105.86
Chippewa	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lac qui Parle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pope	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stevens	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swift	0	0	2	110	2	110
Traverse	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yellow Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**3**	**215.86**	**3**	**215.86**

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

7a. Provide Visitor Services

The visitor count for FY01 at the Morris WMD was approximately 39,774. The District has 244 waterfowl production areas located throughout eight counties offering public use opportunities such as trapping, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, interpretation and environmental education. The headquarters offers a visitor center where general information about MorrisWMD, activities, and programs is available. A scenic, 2.5 mile gravel wildlife tour route is open for vehicle traffic during spring, summer and fall, and is always open for foot or bicycle travel. The route demonstrates wildlife management techniques of the area as well as providing wildlife viewing opportunities. At the headquarters, a short paved trail loops through native prairie and is accessible to people with physical disabilities. We also maintain a 1.2 mile long hiking trail that winds through native prairie, woodlands, and around a wetland. Morris WMD has another self-guided nature trail located at Froland WPA, Pope County, near Starbuck, Minnesota.

Staff provided support to the following events at the District headquarters:

Date	**Event**	**Staff Member**
10/06/00	Brunko class roll nest cylinders	staff
10/30-31/00	UMM Ecol. Lab	Moos
11/02/00	UMM Ecol. Lab	Moos
04/02/01	Morris Fire Department	Gades
05/04/01	UMM	Haugen
05/07/01	Hancock School	Kramer
05/17-18/01	Wetlands Day	staff
05/21/01	Hancock School	Kramer
07/14/01	Prairie Pioneer Day	Buchholz, Haugen, Kramer, Moos
09/18/01	MAHS Environmental Studies	Vacek, Moos

Each year the District provides an opportunity for environmental education for local second graders. This event has become very popular and was extended to two days in FY01. Over 220 students from six schools participated in a variety of instructional activities.

Recreational Activities

A variety of wildlife-oriented activities are available to the public. Some of these include hiking,

nature observation, photography, snow-shoeing, mushroom and berry picking, and cross-country skiing. Hunting, fishing and trapping in accordance with state regulations are permitted on WPAs. WPAs are open year round. They provide both solitary places to take a quiet stroll or places of community events (hunting, etc.) and outdoor class-rooms to observe and learn about the natural world. Local communities benefit from money spent by people using WPAs for recreational activities. The largest impact provided to the local community comes from hunters who are the most frequent users of the land. An estimated 15,530 persons were involved in waterfowl hunting, 450 in other migratory bird sports, 10,445 in upland game hunting, 3,990 big game hunters, 450 fishing , and 635 trapping at various waterfowl production areas of the District. Another 70 swimmers, canoeist or divers made up the beach/water usage. Bicycling, nature watching, skiing, snowshoeing, horse back riding, and berry gathering numbered an estimated 1,983 through the year.

Hunting

Hunting continues to be a major part of many people's lives, especially in rural areas. Even if hunters don't fill their quota, they are out enjoying the great outdoors. The diversity of WPAs in the Morris District offers many options for the hunter.

Waterfowl hunting season was 60 days with a daily bag limit of six birds. A Youth Waterfowl Day was September 16. The season for ducks, coots, and mergansers ran from September 30 through November 28. Hunting success was fair to good, few ducks but concentrated in certain areas; overall, duck season was poor. The early goose season was open from September 2-22, 2000, with the daily bag limit of five geese. The early season targets the local population of giant Canada geese. The area included in this early season and the bag limits set are in part based on depredation complaints. The entire state is included in this hunt. The regular 30 day goose season for the West Zone was October 7-November 5. The daily bag limit was one bird. Hunting success was poor and below normal due to warm, mild weather patterns and low numbers of geese during the season. Geese were staying out in area fields feeding during the day and returning to staging areas during the night. Also an adult goose flock made for difficult hunting conditions. The Lac qui Parle Zone harvest was the lowest since recording began in 1976.

There are hunting opportunities for rabbit, squirrel, ruffed grouse, gray partridge, turkey, crow, woodcock, sora and Virginia rails, snipe, raccoon, coyote, and fox on the WPAs of the District. Pheasant hunting is very popular. The season in 2000 ran from October 14 to December 17 with a two cock limit. Hunting success was average.

Turkey hunting season occurs in the fall and spring. On April 18, 2001, eight different hunt seasons opened, they run through May 27th. Zones 416, 417, 422, 425, and 433 occur in our region. Hunters can only take one male. Success rates for those zones were 61.1 percent, 53.0 percent, 44.2 percent, 18.5 percent, and 41.4 percent respectively.

Archery season for deer opened on September 16, 2000, general firearms season was November 4-5 and November 11-14, 2000, and muzzle loader season occurred from November 25-December 10, 2000. Deer harvest during firearms season was down from 1999 due to weather. A snow/rain mix on both Sundays kept hunters from fields or kept deer tucked under cover, even though past winters have not been harsh and deer populations continue to grow.

Trapping

Red fox and raccoon were open to trapping and hunting year round. Prices of wild fur continue to be down. Generally, furbearers within our District remain at high levels. Trapping data for specific species are not available.

Public Use Survey

A survey of public use and visitor satisfaction started in 1999 in five districts and will continue for three years. The University of Minnesota put out a questionnaire to determine usage on WPA's, how many use them, what do they do in the area, the benefits they get from the visit and how management should be in the future at the WPA. Two survey routes are located in our District; one through Big Stone County and the other through parts of Stevens and Pope County. Preliminary results are awaiting publication. Overall, they found most visitors enjoy their experience, that they return over and over again, and that there is surprisingly high use during non-hunting seasons as well as during hunting seasons.

7b. Outreach

Morris WMD off-site interpretive and educational programs during the year are summarized on the following charts:

Exhibits:

Date	Event	Staff Member
10/14/00	National Wildlife Refuge Week-air boat rides @ Big Stone NWR	Lewis
02/17/01	Habitat Day@ Viking Plaza Alexandria	Buchholz
08/01/01	Stevens County Fair	unstaffed
09/09/01	Prairie Pothole Day	Delehanty

Presentations:

Date	Event	Staff Member
10/27/00	Rendezvous @ SWELL	Buchholz
10/31/00	Morris High School Career Day	Henderson
11/09/00	Morris High School Mentorship Program	Moos
01/24/01	Morris Lions Club	Moos
03/28/01	KSAX television interview on nest cylinders	Buchholz, Haugen
04/16/01	Grassland Workshop-Pope County SWCD	Henderson
05/10/01	Benson High School	Oglesby

Morris staff attended the following meetings: Pope County Ditch 29 Hearings, Red River Ottawa Impoundment Project, Trinity Church-Clinton, Almound Township, West Central Research Center-Childrens Garden project, Bois De Sioux Plan, TSAC, Lac qui Parle-

Yellow Bank Clean Water Partnership, and Benson/Ambush Park Outdoor Learning Center.

Other outreach actions were Morris Elementary School 5th grade Science Fair preparation (Oglesby, Juni, Buchholz) and judging (Buchholz, Haugen), Morris High School Science Fair (Oglesby, Haugen, Henderson, Buchholz), Woody Camp-rolling nest cylinders (Lewis), Pope County Ducks Unlimited Greenwing Banquet (Moos), and Friends Group Ski Day (Delehanty, Lewis) and Birding Day (Delehanty).

Morris WMD submitted 23 news releases to area newspapers and were featured by the area's media coverage in three television/radio spots during the year.

Morris WMD Web page site was put on the Internet on August 23, 2001. The address is http://midwest.fws.gov/MorrisMWD .

Planning and Administration

8a. Comprehensive Conservation Planning

Despite several years of activity in fits and starts, the Morris Comprehensive Conservation Plan remains incomplete. The plan is being done in concert with the other Minnesota wetland management districts, creating a complex process and voluminous product. We decided to break up the six station draft CCP into individual CCPs for each of the six districts although the basic framework is identical for all six. We managed to create a draft of our CCP that should be available for internal review early next fiscal year.

Overall, responsibility for the CCP is within our planning branch in the regional office. Since they are simultaneously working on multiple CCPs, it creates for frustrating time delays that are exacerbated by the need to coordinate the entire process with the six large, complex stations associated with the CCP.

Eventually, we will complete our CCP and the process has helped unify the management between the stations. Still, in hindsight, I would not recommend repeating the decision to combine multiple complex stations into a single CCP. The effort also demonstrated the importance of having a single planning leader in place throughout the planning process.

8b. General Administration

Personnel

There were more permanent personnel changes at Morris WMD this year than ever before. On January 29, Terry Breyfogle filled the position of Soil Conservationist vacated by Judyann Goulet. Terry did not arrive at Morris until Thursday, February 1 due to bad weather between here and Missouri. Terry came to work February 1 and resigned at 4:00 p.m. that day. The severe cold (-20º) and white tundra of blowing snow was too much for him.

On March 30, Seasonal Fire Technician Carol Sweeney resigned to pursue a career away from the Service. On June 15, Seasonal Fire Technician Brant Wobig transferred to the National Forest Service in Colorado.

On June 17, Donald Lantz filled our new Prescribed Fire Specialist position. He came to Morris from Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota.

On July 3, long-time Assistant Manager Gaylord Bober retired from the Service. He had been working at Morris since 1977. His position was filled by Debbie Gaunitz on August 26. Debbie came to us from Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington.

SCEP Students

Katie Kramer came from Sherburne NWR under the SCEP program. She completed her student trainee program here from May 14 to October 7. She was then converted to a permanent, full time Refuge Operations Specialist. Sara Vacek (Juni) completed her trainee program with a work period September 5 through the end of December, 2000. She was hired as a Wildlife Biologist on June 4.

Temporary Personnel

Bryan R. Fandrich, Biological Technician, TFT, 5/13/01 - 8/25/01
Mark A. Norton, Biological Technician, TFT, 5/13/01 - 8/19/01
Teressa L. Rondeau, Biological Technician, TFT, 5/13/01 - 8/19/01
Jill F. Pasche, Office Automation Clerk, TFT, 5/29/01 - 8/19/01

Table 29 - Morris WMD Staff Size - FY96 - 2001

	Permanent				
	Full Time	Full Time Seasonal	Permanent Part Time	Temporary GS & WG	Other Programs*
FY01	14	2	0	4	1
FY00	12	2	0	1	1
FY99	12	2	0	1	1
FY98	12	2	0	2	2
FY97	12	2	0	1	1
FY96	12	1	0	2	2

*YCC, CETA, Work Study, Green Thumb, etc.

Youth Programs

There was no YCC program at Morris WMD this year due to a lack of funds

Other Manpower Programs

Green Thumb

Eugene Scribner has been an employee of the Green Thumb program since October 27, 1998. The Morris WMD has served as the work site for Eugene for the entire period. He has worked 20 to 25 hours per week since he started working in the program. He left on August 24 for a job at a local hotel. We have not been able to replace Eugene because of a lack of workers in the program. We sincerely miss his work around the office and shop.

Volunteers

Over 140 volunteers contributed 1,153 hours to the District in FY2001: two hours on food

plot checks, 173 hours on nest structure work, 961.5 hours helping provide visitor services, and 16.5 hours on outreach. Eugene Scribner put in 945.5 hours, Gary Brunko's ninth grade class (136 students) volunteered 170 hours, Heide Pankrate worked 23.5 hours, Jill Pasche worked eight hours, and Holly Stein contributed six hours to Morris WMD.

Morris area community members formed a "Friends Group" for the Morris WMD last year. The advocates wish to promote and showcase the conservation work of the District, increase public understanding and appreciation, promote community relationships, and strengthen the stewardship of the refuge system. They plan to work with the District to jointly sponsor and implement projects and events that will support Morris. Their efforts will significantly help build visibility and support for the Service and help us to better serve the community.

Safety

There was one accident reported at this station during FY 2001. Rodney Ahrndt pulled a muscle in his left shoulder while loading chemical containers. After several physical therapy sessions his shoulder is healed.

The entire staff has been tested for lyme disease. Temporaries and other personnel were tested the first and last day of work. Permanent personnel were tested once in late fall.

Following is a list of topics for our monthly safety meetings:

Make Safety A Habit	Annual Firefighter Refresher
Ergonomic Programs That Work	Importance of Housekeeping
Warning Labels and Signs	Safe Winter Driving

The station Safety Committee, consisting of three staff members, rotates every three months and remains the most viable part of our safety program. This committee is responsible for planning and presenting our monthly safety meetings and conducting inspections and accident investigations for the station.

The station now stands at 3,094 days without a lost-time accident.

Funding

The station's total funding for the past six years is shown in the following table.

Table 30 - Morris WMD Funding Levels - FY1996 - FY2001

(Dollars in Thousands)

FY	1260	Fire 9200	3110	YCC	1221	1230	1120	Total Budget
01	869.5+	82.9	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	119.3	1,071.7
00	734.8	70.0	-0-	-0-	-0-	7.0	118.5	930.3
99	828.8*	47.7	5.0	-0-	-0-	17.1	120.0	1,018.6
98	703.7**	36.9	5.0	-0-	-0-	13.0	128.0	886.6
97	585.6	34.5	5.0	-0-	-0-	14.8	115.0	754.9
96	584.3	36.5	5.0	-0-	1.0	15.7	102.0	744.5

+ Includes $61,000 of project specific funds and $55,000 for MMS projects

* Includes $183,318 of project specific funds and $25,000 for MMS projects

**Includes $46,000 of project specific funds and $72,000 for MMS projects

The major items that the station received specific funds for this past year under 1260 include:

-MMS - $55,000

-Replace 4 x 4 pickup for private lands program - $21,053

-Replace Boom Sprayer - $7,400 (with trade-in)

-Prairie Chicken study by Minnesota DNR - $20,000

-Ecosystem Seed production - $13,200

Computers

The Morris WMD continues to make advances in the area of computers. Biological Technician Buchholz and Wildlife Biologist Henderson submitted a Computer Management Plan for the office to Manager Delehanty for approval. Internet and E-mail access was converted from internet stations to a Wide Area Network. The ongoing GIS development included hosting a GIS workshop in March for Region 3 WMD's using WMDGIS, which is an Arcview extension developed specifically for Region 3 WMD's. Jill Pasche was hired to digitize the remaining

layers of WMDGIS. By the end of her appointment she had completed the cropland, fire, grazing, haying, seeding, and weed control layers, and partially completed the access points, fencing, hydro lines, nuisance (i.e. rock piles) and posting layers. Biologist Henderson continues to serve as the station's computer support person. With every passing year this segment of the job demands a greater share of his limited time.

A purchase order was issued to Sue Bolander (webworks7) to develop a web page for our office. This was completed in August at a cost of $1,000. Wayne Henderson worked with Sue in developing this site. The public can now access maps of all of our units.

Rehabilitation

Equipment

*A new Ford ½ ton, 4 x 4 pickup was ordered to replace the 1994 Chevy used by the private lands program.

*Two new pickups were purchased with fire funds. A slip-on pumper was purchased for one truck to complete a Type 6 Engine.

*Three Motorola radios were ordered for new vehicles.

*A Vicon seed spreader was purchased at a price of $3,826.

*A rear-mounted Tiger Flail mower and a new boom sprayer were purchased.

*Two Harms 12-ton tandem trailers were purchased for the seed drying boxes.

Buildings

In April of this year office staff painted the walls in the five individual offices and the hallway on the main floor. A contract was issued for $2,950 to have the three large offices and the display area painted. The Service furnished all the paint. This job was completed in September.

Carpet and pad were purchased at a price of $6,200 to replace the bubbling carpet on the main floor of the office. This will be accomplished in FY2002.

Maintenance Worker Gades remodeled the basement into two new offices in anticipation of new staff members. This was accomplished during the winter.

Materials were ordered for a new pole building to be erected behind our cold storage shop building. The cost of materials was $32,542 and was paid for by fire, private lands, and maintenance management funds. The building will be erected by the staff in 2002.

Seal Well

A well was sealed on Froland WPA, Pope County, by Valnes Well Drilling.

FEEDBACK

There is nothing quite so satisfying in refuge management as buying land and restoring habitat. Wetland management districts offer an extraordinary opportunity to be involved with both habitat restoration and land acquisition yet too few refuge system employees have considered working on a wetland management district. Wetland districts are poorly understood and underappreciated by too many of our own people. When created forty years ago, the wetland district model was ahead of its time - working holistically with multiple communities and various interest groups across the landscape and concerned with the entire ecosystem, not just a patch of federal land. This was a new concept in the 1960s and districts are still the among the best places to practice your land management craft over a large geographic area. Wetland district work is refuge management on a landscape scale.

I have worked on four refuges and two wetland districts. Each was wonderful in its own way and anyone who has a chance to make a career anywhere in the refuge system is blessed. Still, upon reflection, there is no doubt that the work I have done on districts is the most complex, most challenging, and most satisfying work of my career. The next time you ponder a career move, give some thought to heading to the prairies and working on a wetland management district. If you enjoy challenging, meaningful work with lots of restoration opportunities, you will thrive.